

# Susanna Loewen Dueck Reimer (1852-1918)

Susanna Loewen Dueck Reimer (1852-1918), by Harvey Kroeker, a great-grandson.

## Background.

Susanna was born to Peter and Susanna (Enns) Loewen in the Molotschna, South Russia, now known as the Ukraine, on October 7, 1852. She had an older brother Isaac and a younger sister Margaretha. When Susanna was about five years old, her mother passed away at the age of 28 years. As a result Johann and Anna Warkentin became Susanna's foster parents. Little is known of her formative years.

## Marriage, 1871.

When she was 18 she received a proposal of marriage from a widower from Friedensfeld with two small boys, Johann aged 6 and Peter aged 9 months. His wife Justina had died October 10, 1870. She accepted and as a result Peter L. Dueck and Susanna Loewen were married on January 1, 1871.

We might well ask, "Why would a young, attractive, intelligent and optimistic young girl marry a widower, ten years her senior, with two small children? Wouldn't there be plenty of prospects for her in the future that would be a much better match?" Very likely one of her considerations would have been the motherless boys. She knew from personal experience what it meant to lose a mother and then be separated from her father to live with strangers. She was not easily fazed by seemingly adverse circumstances and by the fact that Peter had been unfortunate in losing nine or ten horses in only one of two years on his farm.

About a year after the wedding the family moved to Blumenhof in the Borosenko settlement, which was closer to Susanna's home. Here Peter again took up the position of school teacher. He also rented some farm land.

## Emigration, 1871.

Three years after the wedding and a year after the birth of son Heinrich in 1873, the family decided to join the emigration from Russia of the Kleine Gemeinde. They were part of the very first group to enter Canada and sail down the Red River from Moorhead on the steamer "International". After buying necessary supplies in Winnipeg they embarked again and landed where the Rat River flows into the Red.

## Pioneer life.

After a few weeks in the Immigration Sheds a few miles inland, where their son Heinrich died on August 13, Peter and Susanna helped to found the village of Gruenfeld. Later the site was moved slightly and the name became Kleefeld. During this time and for nearly a year before this time, Susanna had been somewhat sickly. An infant son Isaac died in November of the same year. Their next child, Susanna, was more sturdy; born in April, 1876, she not only survived to adulthood but lived to be 103 years old be-

fore she passed away in 1979. They had five daughters altogether that survived to adulthood, married and had offspring before they died. Another child, a son named Bernhard, died at less than four months old.

For the first winter they built a "Sarais", with wooden poles in an "A" frame, covered with piles of straw or hay. Peter L. Duecks shared it with Abram L. Duecks. Some cows and a team of oxen lived at one end, while the people lived in the other.

Peter L. Dueck was a man of many talents. He was hired as a teacher, he farmed, became a day labourer, freighted building wood from Winnipeg with oxen, and finally his main occupation became the book-selling business. He supplied some 60 villages, on two Reserves, mostly with German books. He also served the church as song leader.

## Widowhood, 1887.

On January 1, 1887 on the 16th anniversary of Peter and Susanna's wedding, returning on foot from a visit to the neighbour's, he became quite ill. When he arrived at home, he had to go to bed. His condition worsened, so that eventually a doctor was called who gave the family hope for his recovery. However, this was not to be. After an illness of two weeks, Susanna's husband died on January 15, 1887 at the age of 44.

Susanna's two step-sons John, 21 and Peter 16 had to take charge of the farm and the book store for the time being. Susanna's five daughters ranged in age from one to ten years old.

## Remarriage, 1889.

During Susanna's two years and nearly ten months of widowhood, she received a proposal of marriage from a widower about fifteen years older than she. Susanna decided she wanted a younger man so she declined the offer. She told her family of girls, "I believe that younger men are available. I'll wait."

Her courage and optimism were well rewarded. A little while later, a young son of deacon Abram R. Reimer of Blumenort, said to his father, "I am not waiting till I'm 21. I aim to get married now. Susanna Dueck needs a husband to help her raise her five girls and I want to be that man."

When Peter's father realized his determination, he got things in motion according to custom, and eventually Peter, 19 and Susanna, 37, had their dreams realized. The wedding took place on November 10, 1889.

Susanna's daughters were delighted to have such a precocious, resolute, and good-looking young man for their father.

## Blumenort.

The family moved to Blumenort and each one of the five girls got to be married and to have a family. Anna, the second youngest, mar-

ried Cornelius W. Brandt when she was nearly 21 and had a son Peter. She passed away exactly a year and a day after the wedding. Consequently little Peter D. Brandt was raised by Peter and Susanna Reimer, his grandparents.

The other four girls from Susanna's first marriage all grew up, married and raised large families to maturity.

Peter and Susanna Reimer had a little girl Maria who passed away in infancy. After that a boy and girl were born to them that survived to adulthood, marriage, and a considerable family.

Susanna died on April 16, 1918. She had been a faithful member of the Kleine Gemeinde since her baptism on the confession of her faith in Jesus Christ on December 6, 1870.

## Conclusion,

Susanna was an attractive and intelligent woman with courage, optimism, vivacity, a sense of humour, and a positive outlook on life. Her optimism stemmed not only from her own temperament but also was a result of her faith. I am convinced that the tribute one might give to her for the life she lived, she in turn would say belonged to her Lord and Saviour.

## Descendants.

Descendants (one example from each of her seven married children).

From the first marriage to Peter L. Dueck: 1. Susanna (1876-1979), Mrs. Abram R. Penner, mother of former Steinbach mayor, A. D. Penner; 2. Helena (1878-1950), Mrs. Heinrich R. Reimer, mother of former principal of Steinbach Bible Academy, the late Rev. Ben D. Reimer; 3. Elizabeth (1879-1963), Mrs. Peter B. Kroeker, great-grandmother of the present Associate Professor of Religious Studies at McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, P. Travis Kroeker; 4. Anna (1883-1905), Mrs. Corn. W. Brandt, great-grandmother of former Olympian (1996) volleyball player, Michelle Sawatzky, a great-granddaughter; 5. Margaretha (1885-1968), Mrs. Aron D. Reimer, mother of the late Abe D. Reimer, the founder of Reimer Farm Supplies;

From the second marriage to Peter R. Reimer: 6. Abram L. Reimer, father of Walter F. Reimer, former owner of Reimer Overhead Doors; 7. Maria L. Reimer, Mrs. Franz T. Kroeker, mother of the late Elizabeth (nee Kroeker) Loewen, former missionary to Brazil under New Tribes Mission.

## Sources:

*Prairie Pioneer: Johann W. Dueck* (Published by the John W. Dueck Book Committee, 1996).

*Aron R. Reimer 1885-1953, Margaretha L. Dueck 1885-1968*, by J.A. Reimer and Emil Reimer, 1992.